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ABSTRACT

In the pre-World War I era, advertising practitioners attempted to make their craft a profession. Generally agreeing that the creation of ethical codes was the most important step toward professionalism, practitioners organized the Associated Advertising Clubs of America (AACA). Early journal articles and AACA proceedings indicate that practitioners were motivated by social status and economic self-interest in their quest for professionalism. The development of advertising ethics was tied to interconnected political, economic, and cultural motivations. Practitioners formed political groups to influence other political groups and various government bodies, and created economic groups to protect and solidify their financial relationships with clients and publishers. Practitioners thus hoped that professional ethics would enhance their collective power and improve their potential for gain and social respectability. (Author/DF)

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THE EMERGENCE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM IN THE EARLY ADVERTISING BUSINESS

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Professionalism has become a popular area of study for both sociologists and historians. Dozens of articles and books on the subject have appeared in the past few years. There are a number of reasons for this trend. For one thing, scholars tend to ask the kinds of questions that their society asks, and certainly the professions are under scrutiny of government, consumer organizations, and individuals. Secondly, and not unrelated to the first reason, criticism of the professions is ideologically in vogue among many intellectuals whose own social status has declined in relation to particular professions. Thirdly, professionalism is currently a popular topic because it is viewed by many researchers as one of the most important social phenomenon of modern times, as a process that describes a myriad of changing status relationship occurring amid the division of labor. The study of professionalism is related to cultural, ideological, and intellectual currents that are themselves outgrowths of the rise of professionalism in society.

In spite of widespread interest in professionalism, researchers have worked primarily on what might be termed "established" professions, particularly law and medicine. Few scholars have investigated professionalism in an occupation that does not display the typical attributes of profes-

sionalism, including autonomy, carefully-controlled educational requirements, public mystification of practices, and formal ethical codes.

Advertising does not exhibit the characteristics of a profession. Virtually anyone can open an advertising practice. The ethical codes are weak and unenforceable. There are no educational requirements. The only mystification surrounding the practice of advertising has to do with its alleged social-scientific foundations. However, such mystification is more a product of the aspirations of advertising academics than it is an accurate reflection of advertising agency practices and beliefs. Practitioners for the past 75 years have criticized advertising academics who claim secret and scientific revelations of the workings of consumers' minds in the marketplace. They have tended to view social-scientific approaches to advertising as both unpractical and as a threat to their everyday knowledge of the craft.

Since early this century, advertising practitioners have recurrently and persistently attempted to make their craft a profession, but without success. And precisely because of such continuing failure the advertising community is an excellent area for research in professionalism. Unlike law and medicine, in which the original purposes and objectives of professionalism are now clouded by success, advertising continues to make explicit the aspirations and hopes that precipitate an occupation's drive for professionalism.

I

My research on advertising ethics begins with several central theoretical and methodological assumptions. For example, I assume that man's behavior is purposive and meaningful. Furthermore, I assume that such meanings are collectively produced and shared in and through communication. Humans create significant worlds of experience that serve as guides for behavior, thoughts, and sentiments. Human behavior is best explained not as the product of innate drives, environmental stimuli or homeostatic functions, but as meaningful symbolic action. Thus, when doing historical research, I assume that through the use of adequate evidence it is possible to infer motives in behavior and to interpret the world as experienced by the individuals and groups under study. Unless evidence shows otherwise, I take public display of behavior as indicative of private motives. For example, by studying several dozen trade journals, numerous club and association proceedings, personal memoirs, biographies, and early textbooks, I attempted to capture many of the feelings, beliefs, and aspirations of the early advertising community. I was able to discern instances when public proclamations differed from private motivations. I was able to describe some of the different points of view about professionalism that led to struggles among various occupational and social groups within the advertising community. In short, by examining available communication artifacts I recreated many of early

practitioners' professional motives and actions and critically interpreted some of the results of their activities.

Finally, like Max Weber, I assume that modern societies are marked by unstable social orders in which a myriad of cultural, political, and economic groups struggle for legitimation and power. Although these three types of groups often are woven together in a complex web of mutual influence, it is possible for the researcher to untangle their relationships. In the early advertising community, for example, practitioners formed political groups for the expressed purpose of wielding legal power over other political groups and over various governmental bodies. They also created economic groups to protect and solidify their financial relationships with clients and publishers. And, as members of the new middle class, practitioners sought to elevate their social status by laying claims to professionalism and by publicly displaying the economic fruits of their business through conspicuous consumption. The development of advertising ethics was tied to these interconnected political, economic, and cultural motivations. Practitioners hoped that professional ethics would enhance their collective power, improve their potential for pecuniary gain, and seize honor for their occupation in society. Although advertising practitioners often used the word "service" to describe their motivations for establishing ethical codes, historical records clearly show that they viewed professionalism not as a means for submitting their activities to public debate but rather as a way of securing autonomy from society.

II

Advertising ethics first became a concern among practitioners in the early years of the 20th century. At that time copywriters, advertisers, and agents began discussing the topic in trade journals and at conventions and club meetings. They openly asked each other what were the benefits of establishing professional ethics. Indeed, the words "ethics" and "professionalism" entered the advertising community's vocabulary at precisely the same time, becoming symbolic cornerstones of the first national advertising organization, called by supporters the "Truth Movement."

The Truth Movement was launched in 1905 by an excited group of advertisers and agents who met in Chicago to discuss the possibility of making their occupation a profession. They formed the American Federation of Advertising Clubs, an association of local Midwestern social clubs, to "advance the advertising profession" in "every city and town of importance." In 1906 it was renamed the Associated Advertising Clubs of America (AACA), and for the next few years the number of member clubs rose dramatically, giving the association widespread coverage in the trade press.[1]

By 1911, dozens of Midwestern and Eastern advertising clubs began pledging financial support for the association. The ideas and activities of the organization appeared in all of the major trade journals, which called practitioners from throughout the nation to a convention in Boston. At this first

heavily-publicized meeting, called a success by trade press reporters, speakers told the advertising community how to make the craft a profession. A newspaperman from Detroit explained to the conventioneers, "If you are to become a profession, you must here and now formulate a code. That code need spell but the one word, Truth, and all other worthy things shall be added unto you."[2] A Rabbi told the same group, "I feel that largely in your hands lies the future of American industry and the character of our commercial morals, among ourselves and with other people. I believe that it is for you to work out a code of ethics in your profession that will realize such high expectations as I and others may have of you."[3]

Those comments typified the hopes and aspirations motivating the first attempts at making advertising a profession. Practitioners believed that ethical codes would elevate the social status of the trade. They earnestly wanted to rid themselves of a poor public image and to give social legitimation to the techniques and ideas of advertising. All advertising practitioners, including copywriters, advertising managers, and publishers, agreed that professionalism would help them to improve their tarnished public image. As one practitioner put it, patent medicine advertising, financial scheme advertising, and similar promotional activities "linked its exponents...with the long-haired fellows in big slouch hats that sell tape worm poison on the streets."[4] Early professionalism was not an outgrowth primarily of economic incentives, since agents, publishers, and advertisers in 1911 were still at odds over such fundamental

issues as agency compensation and agency recognition. Rather, evidence indicates that professionalism was viewed by practitioners most importantly as a means of enhancing the craft's social prestige.

The "social" incentive behind the formulation of ethical codes is most clearly seen in a 1911 resolution offered by the Des Moines club and unanimously adopted by AACA members:

> WHEREAS, Any movement which tends to exclude the dishonest and incapable from the profession of advertising will in the same measure raise the standard of our profession, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Associated Advertising Clubs of America hereby authorize the president to appoint a committee to draft a plan whereby a standard of qualifications for advertising men may be suggested for the assistance and guidance of practicing advertising men and advertising students, which plan shall be communicated to all affiliated clubs, with the recommendation that it be brought to the attention of all their members."[5]

At the AACA's next annual convention, the committee reported that the "first standard for an advertising man must be a careful study of truth."[6] This report in 1911 led to the AACA's preoccupation with ethical codes as a means of "raising the standard" of the profession.

An ethical code seemed to AACA supporters to be the most visible sign of professionalism. It meant self-regulation and self-determination, two important ideas they took from law and medicine. Ethical codes symbolized professional harmony and community responsibility.

But not all practitioners agreed with the dreams of AACA members. Some non-members evidently believed that ethical codes might lower their social status by limiting profits and by eventually reducing practitioners' disposable income. They linked social honor

most directly with economic success, an idea that AACA supporters said was unprofessional.

These contrasting views of how to attain social prestige worked against the AACA's drive for professionalism. AACA members sought social status through collective action; other practitioners found adequate social prestige in the individual use and display of their material wealth, a process Veblen called conspicuous consumption. In a fundamental sense, the AACA spurred professionalization in the advertising business by shifting practitioners' perceptions of themselves. For the first time, they began collectively defining themselves in relationship to the honor and prestige of their occupation in society rather than individually defining themselves only according to the pecuniary fruits of their skills and activities.

The fact that some individual practitioners continued to disregard the AACA's call for professional ethics was a major source of irritation for the organization's members. The Boston convention produced many papers outlining the need for instilling a collective spirit among all of the nation's practitioners, but obviously lacking were any specific proposals on how to create enforceable ethical codes. John Romer, editor of Printers' Ink, returned to New York from the Boston convention and initiated work on possible methods of legal enforcement. He hired Harry D. Nims, a well-known member of the bar and author of Nims on Unfair Competition, to draft a model statute based on successful New York and Massachusetts laws. The resulting Printers' Ink statute made untrue, deceptive, or misleading advertising a misdemeanor. Using the pages of his very successful trade journal, Romer asked AACA members to fight for enactment of the model statute in all states. He also told them to form local

vigilance committees to "investigate cases of questionable advertising and to co-operate with the local prosecuting officers in securing convictions under the law when such action should be necessary."[7]

Local clubs enthusiastically supported Romer's idea, which gave practical direction to the excitement generated at the Boston convention. They liked most of all the fact that clubs were guaranteed an active role in locating offenders and in bringing them to justice. The Printers' Ink statute approximated professional ethical codes by providing practitioners with a self-regulatory role within the profession. Local clubs could "police the advertising seas for the purpose of increasing public confidence in most advertising and by discouraging that which is not honest. Our weapons are constructive thought and moral suasion on the one hand--and drastic measures on the other."[8] In addition, members of the AACA hoped that local vigilance committees could minimize the bad publicity that might accompany legal battles by persuading offenders to discontinue dishonest methods. As Printers' Ink put it, "The chief duty of a vigilance committee is not to prosecute offenders, but to induce offenders to reform."[9]

During late 1911 and early 1912 dozens of local clubs formed vigilance committees and worked for passage of the model statute legislation in their own communities. Under the direction of Nims and Edward K. Strong, a professor of psychology, the New York vigilance committee reviewed hundreds of cases of suspected advertising fraud. Clubs in Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Atlanta, Des Moines, Seattle, and Denver established active committees. In 1912 the AACA created the National Vigilance Committee to review the work of the local clubs and to suggest improvements in legislation and

technique.[10]

The 1912 AACA national convention proceedings show that practitioners believed that the success of the vigilance committees would give the American people the impression that advertising had become a profession. George W. Coleman, the inspiring and charismatic president of the AACA, appointed a committee to develop specific plans for selling the vigilance committee idea to the general public. The committee devised what became known as the "Truth Emblem," a circular seal with "Truth" inscribed on a globe. Local clubs planned to display the emblem in stores, offices, and public buildings throughout the country.[11]

The "Truth Movement," as members of the AACA typically called it, was a public relations scheme designed to bring honor to the profession. Using the techniques of their craft, practitioners created an image for their occupation and diligently began promoting it to the American people. They delivered the "message" of truth wherever they could gain entry to a public medium. Some members convinced Protestant churches to allow them to address the congregation on the virtues of truthful advertising. Other members, especially AACA officers, wrote persuasive magazine articles on how advertising had become a profession.[12] AACA members also wrote publicity stories for local newspapers. And other members delivered speeches to public school children, extolling the benefits of advertising. As one practitioner told the readers of a trade journal, the AACA was

> "educating advertising men and the general public in regard to the opportunities of the work of the Committee and calling attention to the advantages that will follow the establishment of a larger measure of

> confidence in advertising by eliminating all that is objectionable...When the public learn (sic) that the advertisers and advertising men of this country are seriously in earnest in their own work, then will that confidence be established which will make advertising one of the most powerful educational forces in the world."[13]

During 1912 and 1913 membership in the AACA skyrocketed. Herbert Houston, one of the most active members of the association, in 1914 wrote, "Ten years ago, each of these clubs had worked alone, in its own field and in its own way, to improve advertising conditions. Then the spirit of cooperation brought the units into a strong organization that has worked with surprising success...Today this organization is composed of 128 clubs with 12,000 members...."[14]

Also at the 1914 convention, the AACA, which then changed its name to the Associated Advertising Clubs of the World (AACW), developed advertising's first ethical codes. Called the "Standards of Practice," the codes were public relations statements written by each of the associations' 15 departments. Houston spoke for many members when he declared that "it is this practical, structural reformation from within that is the significant thing in the movement" for truth in advertising.[15] The AACW hoped to convince the American people that advertising was a reputable, professional occupation by presenting the standards to hundreds of social groups, including churches and women's clubs.[16] The educational committee of the AACW developed lecture and study courses for the expressed purpose of teaching the standards to neophyte practitioners.[17]

The concept of "public service" dominated the Standards of Practice. For example, the agricultural publications division

began their standards of practice with the statement that the primary objective of farm journals was to "consider the interests of the subscriber first in both editorial and advertising columns." Business papers defined their mission as eliminating "personal opinions" from columns and considering "the interests of the subscriber." Magazine members of the AACW expressed the image of public service by stating that the "magazine publisher is a trustee of the millions of homes whose entertainment and cultivation he strives to promote." General advertisers stated that their work should reflect a "responsibility to the public." Even the printers suggested that their division's primary function was "business uplift and social service."[18]

By 1914, the tone and direction of the Truth Movement had taken definite shape. Originally concerned with getting rid of patent medicine and other "untruthful" advertising, the movement had by 1914 become an extensive public relations program for professionalization. The AACW continued fighting for passage of state legislation based on the model statute drafted by Printers' Ink, but a growing number of practitioners viewed laws less as a way to exterminate dishonest advertising and more as a way of enhancing public faith in advertising and improving the public image of the profession.

III

In addition to seeing the development of advertising ethics as a means of enhancing their own social status in the inchoate nation, the AACA expressed over and over again that ethical codes would improve and maintain the profitability of the business

of advertising. In this respect, the collective drive for professionalism among early advertising practitioners became a business activity. Ethical codes were seen as promotional devices; an image of ethicality was a valuable economic resource.

Although publicly the AACA usually portrayed a united front, it was in reality composed of numerous contentious economic and status groups. The strongest contention existed between local and national advertising interests. Local practitioners, including newspaper space salesman and retail copywriters, viewed the AACA as a vehicle for elevating their position in the contemporary social order. They believed that a national occupational organization would help them to transcend the social confines of the local community and to construct a national identity founded on occupational specialization. Seizing hold of the cosmopolitan spirit of professionalism, they hoped to rise above the provincial culture of their towns and cities. It was this vision, expressed in the word "professional," that brought over 12,000 members to the AACA by 1914.[19]

Although local practitioners represented the bulk of AACA membership, a small number of national advertisers, agency personnel, and large-scale publishers greatly influenced the activities and policies of the association. They were less concerned with using the AACA to attain social status, since for the most part they had already achieved the notoriety and prestige stemming from financial success. For them, the AACA was a way of gaining economic control over local businesses and improving the public image of advertising. The economic control

could be achieved by getting the AACA to support policies forcing retail shops and stores to work with national advertisers on store promotions and distribution. And the public image of advertising could be improved by persuading local practitioners to regulate themselves through municipal law and peer pressure.[20]

One of national advertisers' primary economic motivations behind their support of the AACA involved local store practices that hindered the exploitation of national markets by consumer goods producers. Many retailers and merchants refused to stock particular national, branded goods, offering buyers non-advertised goods in "substitution." Other store owners stocked national brands but often gave them poor shelf locations. To combat these problems, the AACA "educated" small-town merchants in the efficient use of store promotions and in the "unethicality" of brand substitution. Printers' Ink commented on these problems in a 1912 editorial, "The small city...advertising club is made up largely of retailers, with the newspaper publisher, his circulation manager, the business-school proprietor, and perhaps a lawyer and other prominent men in the membership. In such clubs advertising is usually looked on as mere copy-writing; the business-promotion idea is not grasped. These small clubs find it difficult to carry out any educational outline that the national association may suggest."[21] Clearly, national advertisers believed that the AACA would aid in conquering the localism that hindered the development of national markets.

Also of direct economic consequence to national advertisers and to large consumer goods agencies was the regulation of

deceptive and false advertising. Although all AACA members agreed that such advertising was unethical, the large manufacturers and agencies fought most vigorously for ethical codes. They believed that untruthful and deceptive advertising was a direct threat to the future of the advertising business. Printers' Ink reported that "dishonest advertising" was "continually depreciating the value of all advertising."[22] Practitioners found that the publicity arising from the establishment of municipal laws and ethical codes was a great boon to advertising effectiveness. Judicious Advertising told its readers that passage of a local advertising law "was the greatest business stimulant ever administered" in Boston.[23] Worried about widespread consumer distrust, national advertisers hoped the AACA could convince local practitioners carefully to monitor newspapers and magazines and to report all dishonest advertising to local vigilance committees. What was an impossible chore for the small number of national advertisers became an important professional duty for local practitioners.

It is easy to overemphasize the economic self-interest of national advertisers who joined forces with local practitioners in the AACA. National advertisers certainly used the AACA to protect and improve their financial position, but their own professional aspirations also were an important source of motivation, as shown by arguments over the first membership licensing systems. By 1914, many AACA members believed that the association had overextended its call for professionalism; virtually any businessman could join the association and display

its truth emblem in his store or office. John Romer remarked on this problem,

> Associated Clubs, by whose authority the emblem is used, assume no responsibility whatsoever. The value of the emblem in the public mind depends entirely upon the judgment with which its use is granted or withheld, yet there is no tangible assurance that the judgment will be exercised carefully and with circumspection. If a totally unfit advertiser should get the right to use the emblem, the answer would be, 'Too bad. We'll take it away from him!"[24]

Because of the organization's size, it was increasingly difficult to determine and to enforce a membership policy. Indeed, there had never been any membership policy, any means of limiting entrance to the association. Consequently, two distinct licensing systems were presented to the members, one representing the interests of local clubs and the other representing the interests of national advertisers. The former system, called the "Fort Wayne Plan," proposed that local clubs establish licensing committees for granting use of the emblem free of charge to all advertisers who agreed to comply with the honesty standards set forth in the Printers' Ink statute. If any fraudulence occurred, the local club would reimburse the complainant and revoke the offender's membership license. The latter system called for licensing individual publishers who would be endorsed by the local club. The media were to pay a license fee, sixty percent of which would go to the national club.[25] National advertisers supported this proposal primarily because they disliked the idea of national and local practitioners receiving the same types of licenses. The general publicity

committee of the AACA decided that although "large advertisers would not care to use the Truth Emblem if small advertisers were permitted to do so," the Fort Wayne Plan had the most merit. The mass of local practitioners, voting in their own status interests, approved the Fort Wayne Plan in 1914.[26] Thereafter, they could claim a position equal to national practitioners.

The status conflicts that troubled the AACA and the AACW were seemingly mild when compared with the spirit of cooperative publicity that marked the association between 1914 and World War I. Realizing their interdependent economic interests and mutual professional aspirations, members of the association increasingly found common ground in their desire to convince the American people that advertising was an indispensable part of modern economic enterprise. Emulating doctors and lawyers, they agreed on the best way to position their product of professionalism in the general public consciousness. In the years immediately preceding 1917, the AACW slowly changed its public relations strategy to take advantage of the period's Progressive mythos. It portrayed advertising as public service by carefully manipulating meaningful cultural sentiment. Members linked ethics with economics, telling themselves and the general public that honest advertising was the most efficient form of business promotion and that, in the long run, professional advertising would lower the prices of goods sold to Americans. Practitioners wrote that "untruthful" advertising was dishonest primarily because it promoted "frightful waste."[27] They said again and again that

"advertising immensely reduces the cost of distribution."[28] Advertising was "a big vital organization that is improving the standards of the whole field of business."[29]

The AACW was by 1914 no longer afraid to proclaim publicly the relationship between advertising and economic interest. In fact, the efficiency argument became the prime defense of the use of advertising in society; economic success emerged as a central public legitimation of advertising. Claude Hopkins, perhaps the best-known copywriter of the period, suggested that it was time for the advertising community to admit to Americans that advertising creates "for its products the most effective monopoly." "We know that advertising immensely reduces the cost of distribution," he wrote. "It is an actual economy in addition to the service it renders against competitors. Why then should we let there be this lurking suspicion that advertising increases the cost to consumers?"[30] He told fellow practitioners to inform the public of the outstanding job that advertising was doing in promoting monopolistic competition and in ensuring efficient production and distribution.[31]

The equating of ethics with economic efficiency put the obligation for advertising ethics on the general public. As strange as it seems, the AACW's publicity campaign successfully convinced many Progressives that the primary responsibility for ethical advertising rested with individual consumers, not with the advertising community. As the Independent put it, advertising "tends to make the public a partner in private

business."[32] Current Opinion added that "the customer holds the future of advertising in the hollow of his hand and he is beginning to realize it...The consumer is learning that if he is to preserve his ability to spend his money wisely, he is obliged to use advertising as a weapon against himself."[33] Dozens of magazines ran articles suggesting that unethical advertising would exist as long as "unsophisticated" people, especially immigrants, continued to "vote" for products promoted by dishonest advertisers.

IV

By the time the United States entered World War I, advertising had become a major weapon of Progressives, who argued that it should play a vital social role in "bringing unconscious elevation of intellectual or spiritual ideas," in "uplifting" Bohemian culture to middle class life.[34] The Chicago sociologist Francis Kellor told colleagues advertising could help "Americanize" immigrants.[35] William Jennings Bryan, speaking at a meeting of the Chicago Advertising Association, stated that politics and advertising were inseparable forms of promotion.[36] And many progressive educators argued that it was the duty of school administrators to use advertising to "give the public the right concept of the mission of the college."[37]

The Progressive emphasis on the benefits of advertising for society paralleled practitioners' quest to create a client. By showing Americans how advertising would ameliorate a host of social ills, practitioners were attempting to make consumers

clients, to define the American people as the recipients of advertising services. In reality, of course, practitioners worked directly for manufacturers, not for individual citizens or the society as a whole. But professionalism required the image of altruistic intentions, and the Progressive ideals of efficiency and material betterment matched perfectly the needs of the advertising community.

World War I was a great boon to the public legitimation of advertising as an economic force, as well as a promoter of the social status of the practitioner in America. Working closely with George Creel's government committee, the AACW created hundreds of newspaper and magazine advertisements to recruit civilians and to sell liberty bonds. Advertising also proved to be a valuable form of wartime propaganda.[38]

The Progressive ideals of efficiency and social control helped practitioners solidify their functional role in the emerging corporate economy. Economic efficiency and public service became mutually supportive justifications for applying advertising principles to virtually all social activities, from church growth to political campaigns. Progressivism helped the AACW attain social respectability for its members, but in the process eclipsed important ethical questions. The movement for truth in advertising successfully shifted public discussion from fundamental questions of legitimacy to more trivial questions of professional ethicality. Although advertising has never reached the status of a profession, it has become since World War I an almost unreproachable activity.

If in no other way, the advertising community has achieved professionalism by defining ehticality in its own terms. But not all credit can be given to the AACA or the AACW. History shows that the Progressive spirit of American culture provided a fertile environment for the growth and blossoming of advertising.

V

As advertising became an increasingly legitimate form of economic activity, the AACW declined in importance, eventually replaced by the Better Business Bureau and the American Advertising Federation. The professional aspirations that had brought thousands of practitioners together for annual conventions in the first decade of the century began fading. To a certain extent, the drive for professionalism became little more than a self-serving desire for social recognition and occupational autonomy. If the trade press accurately reflects the thoughts and sentiments of early practitioners, the advertising community has never sought professionalism with more fervor than it did prior to World War I.[39] Neither has the business worked as diligently to establish ethical codes. Licensing plans are long forgotten. Clio awards have replaced truth trophies. Ethics are equated with law. The term "profession" is today used loosely by practitioners to describe all advertising-related occupations.

Nevertheless, the rise and decline of the AACW's quest for professionalism elucidates a number of important lessons for today. Ethical codes were to a large extent an outgrowth

of status and economic interests. They functioned to ward off unwanted government regulation, to legitimize the activities of practitioners, and to elevate the occupation's social status. Ethical codes were seen as vehicles for solidifying professional autonomy, for keeping the general public from taking part in discussions of professional conduct. The early advertising community hoped that ethical codes would help convince governmental officials and individual citizens that practitioners should be allowed to deal internally with their professional problems. The AACW saw ethical codes as the first step toward achieving control over society through professionalization. Members believed that if they could establish their own definition of ethicality they could then go on to negotiate their own definition of the role of the profession in society. They could simultaneously legitimize advertising and solidify their status in the social order. Ethical codes were symbolic steppingstones to professionalism.

The rise and decline of the AACW indicates that professional codes invariably lead to struggles between local and national interests. Or, to put it another way, professionalism requires hegemony of information and action. The Standards of Practice, for example, were formalized ideas developed in committees and passed on to practitioners across the country. There was no room for geographic diversity or public debate; local clubs were expected to support and enforce the standards developed in committees composed largely of national advertising interests. The AACW stifled debate <u>within</u> the profession by defining the issues and offering solutions.

Early attempts by advertising practitioners to create ethical codes for their craft also indicate that laws often serve to help occupational groups achieve professionalism. The AACA sought municipal and state laws prohibiting false and deceptive advertising, earnestly believing that the Printers' Ink statute could in the long run be used to the profession's advantage. Members realized that the proper legislation would actually enable the profession to begin regulating its own members. By passing appropriate laws, national advertisers were able to limit partially the activities of practitioners throughout the country.

In addition, the passing of laws prohibiting false and deceptive advertising served in the long run to legitimize the practice of advertising in society. Public discussion increasingly centered on advertising "ethics"--meaning false and deceptive practices--rather than on the nature and function of advertising in the economic, political, and cultural affairs of the country. Honest advertising became ethical advertising. The legalization of advertising ethics short-circuited intellectual investigation and significant public discourse. Public policy issues relating to advertising were increasingly relegated to lawyers and other legal advisors, who were themselves professionals.

Finally, this investigation of the rise of advertising ethics shows that professions invariably create and sustain relevant myths that further sanction their social status and legitimize their economic advantages. These self-justifying myths are not totally fabricated, but are carefully extracted

from contemporary culture and systematically manipulated through public relations techniques. To this extent, all professions are sold to the public, although the advertising community was probably more zealous in applying promotional techniques to their occupation than were many other groups during the same period. For the AACA, the relevant myths were all tied to the Progressive ethos: advertising raises the standard of living; advertising improves economic efficiency; advertising "uplifts" culture; advertising alleviates social problems; advertising allows individuals to participate directly in economic transactions. Today the shibboleths are somewhat different: advertising is free speech; advertising provides free television programming; advertising merely reflects social values; advertising is a vital part of free enterprise; advertising enhances economic competition. Every myth, regardless of its ultimate truth, serves in society to sanction the rights and privileges of the profession. The myth that "honest advertising is ethical advertising" has limited the universe of discourse in which our society is able to apprehend and analyze the ethicality of advertising.

Why did the advertising community fail to win the degree of professionalism characteristic of occupations such as law and medicine? The AACA and AACW were hindered by diverse membership; advertisers, agencies, and publishers were never entirely willing to overlook their own economic interests for the sake of professionalism. Beyond their mutual desire for enhanced social status were serious economic differences.

Also, the advertising community had to cope with the general public sentiment regarding business during the Progressive period. Business was associated with financial gain and self-interest, not with public service and altruistic ideals. Although businessmen have continued since World War I to achieve an enhanced position in the social order, they have been unable to exorcise totally the venal image that precursed their rise to middle class life early in the century. Also, the advertising business was never able to overcome the problem of defining a client. Although they repeatedly sought to convince Americans that advertising was a service to the country, they were themselves susceptible to the whims, demands, and funds of manufacturers. Finally, the advertising business at least partially verifies Max Weber's statement that a social or occupation group cannot achieve honor simply by demanding it from society. Social status must to a certain extent be granted by society. Law and medicine were able to form professional communities largely as a result of the mystification of law and science created by secular trends in society; they took advantage of nascent legal and scientific monopolies of knowledge in American culture. The advertising community, on the other hand, has appropriated no knowledge that requires specialized and mystified skills. Although the practice of advertising has achieved substantial social legitimation as an economic activity, it is far from becoming a profession.

NOTES

[1] The early activities of the association are described in J.R. Woltz, "The Chicago Advertising Association," Agricultural Advertising 14 (March 1906): 284, "Federation of Advertising Clubs," Profitable Advertising 16 (August 1906): 304, "The National Federation of Advertising Clubs," Agricultural Advertising 15 (October 1906): 366, and "The Convention of the Advertising Clubs of America," Judicious Advertising and Advertising Experience 5 (November 1906): 41.

[2] H.J. Kenner, The Fight for Truth in Advertising (New York: Round Table Press, Inc., 1936), p. 21.

[3] Ibid., p. 22.

[4] "Golden Rule Advertising and the Golden Egg," Judicious Advertising 12 (April 1914): 63.

[5] "Defining the Advertising Man," Advertising and Selling 21 (November 1911): 57.

[6] Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Convention of the Associated Advertising Clubs of America (n.p.: Associated Advertising Clubs of America, 1912), p. 337.

[7] "The Campaign Against Fraudulent Advertising," Printers' Ink 90 (4 March 1915): 66. The Printers' Ink statute appeared in many of the trade journals. It is reprinted in Kenner, pp. 27-28.

[8] "At War With Dishonest Advertising," Judicious Advertising and Advertising Experience 11 (December 1912): 129.

[9] "The Campaign Against Fraudulent Advertising," p. 74.

[10] Kenner, pp. 32-33.

[11] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

[12] See, e.g., Herbert S. Houston, "The New Morals of Advertising," The World's Work 28 (August 1914): 384; and Houston, "Working Out Business Ethics," The World's Work 30 (September 1915): 564.

[13] James C. Woodley, "The Policing of Advertising," Judicious Advertising and Advertising Experience 11 (April 1913): 69-72.

[14] "The New Morals of Advertising," p. 384.

[15] "New Standards and Responsibilities for American Advertising," Current Opinion, August 1915, p. 117.

[16] See, e.g., "Sounding the Ethical Note of Truth in Modern Advertising," Current Opinion, August 1915, p. 117.

[17] "The New Morals of Advertising," p. 387.

[18] "Standards of Practice," Agricultural Advertising 26 (July 1914): 55.

[19] The overnight success of the AACA was due largely to its open membership policy which permitted local practitioners to fraternize with national practitioners, particularly agency copywriters and advertising managers. Paradoxically, it was the open membership policy that prohibited the development of strong ethical codes and that led to disputes between local and national practitioners over licensing systems. In this respect, numerical success can be detrimental to professionalization if it is not carefully tempered with internal control over members.

[20] In 1910, for example, the AACA's Central Division president was Smith B. Queal, representative for Woman's Home Companion; and S.C. Dobbs, advertising manager for Coca Cola, was elected president of the AACA. Both men were extremely influential in the development of AACA policy. See Smith B. Queal, "Ad Club Movement Vital," Judicious Advertising and Advertising Experience 8 (August 1910): 53, and "Open Letter to Associated Ad Club From President Dobbs," Printers' Ink 69 (1 December 1909): 37.

[21] "Small Ad Club Problems Once More," Printers' Ink 81 (3 October 1912): 83.

[22] "The Campaign Against Fraudulent Advertising," p. 66.

[23] "Fake Advertising Laws Successful," Judicious Advertising 14 (January 1916): 54.

[24] "Licensing the 'Truth' Emblem," Printers' Ink 87 (9 April 1914): 105.

[25] Richard H. Waldo, "Should the 'Truth' Emblem Be Licensed?" Agricultural Advertising 25 (March 1914): 22.

[26] "License to Advertisers to Use Truth Emblem," Printers' Ink 87 (16 April 1914): 58.

[27] "'Reason Why' of the Truth Movement," Judicious Advertising 13 (December 1915): 111.

[28] Claude Hopkines, "Dealing With Public Opinion," Judicious Advertising and Advertising Experience 11 (december 1912): 45-47.

[29] "Working Out Business Ethics," p. 560.

[30] Hopkins, pp. 45-47.

[31] The importance of the efficiency ideal in Progressive thought is cogently discussed in Samuel Haber, Efficiency and Uplift: Scientific Management in the Progressive Era 1890-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

[32] "The Moral Value of Advertising," The Independent, 2 January 1902, p. 53.

[33] "New Standards and Responsibilities for American Advertising," Current Opinion, August 1914, p. 139.

[34] Bessie L. Putnam, "The Advertiser as an Educator," Agricultural Advertising 11 (November 1904): 66.

[35] Kellor became director of the American Association of Foreign Language Newspapers, a virtual advertising agency that persuaded manufacturers of consumer goods to help "Americanize" immigrants by advertising in the foreign language press. Her sociological ideas regarding advertising are discussed in two of her books: Straight America: A Call to National Service (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916); Immigration and the Future (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1920).

[36] Agricultural Advertising 18 (April 1908): 594-96.

[37] Marco Morrow, "Legitimate College Advertising," Agricultural Advertising 16 (June 1907): 578.

[38] Articles on the uses of advertising for war promotion filled the advertising trade press during 1917 and 1918. Also see George Creel, How We Advertised America (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1920).

[39] After World War I there were relatively few articles on professionalism in the trade press. There are two possible explanations. for this. First, one could argue that advertising indeed became a profession; practitioners no longer needed to "work" for professionalism. Second, one would argue that the war was a crucial turning point in practitioners' drive for professionalism, that even though the occupation did not become a profession it became a legitimate social and economic activity. Practitioners lost their preoccupation with professionalism because professionalism was no longer seen as necessary for social status or for economic protection of the occupation. I suggest the latter interpretation in a review of the content of several dozen early trade journals, "The Trade Press of Advertising: Its Content and Contribution to the Development of the Profession," in Richard W. Pollay, ed., Information Sources in Advertising History (Wesport, Comm.: Greenwood Press, 1979).